

Munich Security Conference – Special Edition – Beyond Westlessness EN EN

As the pandemic disrupted the traditional **Munich Security Conference**, an informal and independent congress on Security usually gathering very senior figures, the forecasted opening was replaced by a special virtual edition. This live broadcast was titled « Beyond Westlessness: Renewing transatlantic cooperation, Meeting global challenges » and gathered J. Biden, A. Merkel, E. Macron, A. Guterres (UN Secretary General), U. Von Der Leyen, C. Michel, among others, who spoke one after another.

It was for the newly elected **US president** the opportunity to set out some aspects of his foreign policy agenda. His opening statement clarified that “America is back” and will contribute to global challenges and affairs. On defence matters, he also announced as a sign of truce the halting in withdrawal of troops from Germany.

For its part, **E. Macron** said that he « does believe in NATO », and that the European strategic autonomy he frequently calls for did not mean drifting apart from the US. But he also clarified that in his view, NATO needed a new « political momentum » and that Europe should take more of the burden of its own security, as US priorities have lately shifted from Europe.

A. Merkel pointed out Germany’s attachment to multilateralism and transatlantic relations. As a sign of their commitment, she quoted the fact that Germany achieved in 2020 1.5% of GDP for defence spending, versus 1.1% in 2014, and the various support to military operations worldwide. She stays committed both in NATO, central pillar of transatlantic relations, and European Defence policy as complementary aspects.

Other **main topics** raised were the common response to Covid-19, climate change and regulation of online content, both requiring high cooperation.

Obstacles in Franco-German industrial cooperation GE FR

France and Germany have many ongoing **industrial defence projects** : FCAS, MGCS, EURODRONE, ... The latest Franco-German Defence and Security Council end of January was the occasion to draw their current status. However, since then, some **disagreements** were brought to light.

The first matter is the modernisation of the **Tiger attack helicopters**, launched jointly in 2018, with a OCCAR contract for Airbus, Thales and MBDA. A. Merkel underlined that negotiations were still necessary, and the press agency Reuters stated from anonymous sources that the Bundeswehr was not keen, finding low interest due to the aircraft poor operational availability.

Concerning the **FCAS**, Airbus Defence & Space “Betriebsrat” (works council) and the IG Metall syndicate have pleaded for a German NGF demonstrator, in addition to the one to be build with Dassault, as prime contractor for the aircraft itself. They fear German engineers would loose the know-how from Eurofighter and Tornado, and that an industrial project of this amount would have low return on investment for the country. They also pointed out that this demonstrator would help Germany to continue in case FCAS fails. On the French side, Dassault CEO recently recalled his opinion on such matters: the aim to pursue is not only work sharing but also efficiency, to develop the best fitted aircraft.

The demonstrator project and its financing has still to be brought before the Bundestag for a vote. Before this critical step, high level discussions are still ongoing to settle on the workshare between France and Germany.

23/02/21

German roadmap for modernising the Bundeswehr [EN](#) [GE](#)

The German Ministry of defence published on Feb. 10th a “Position paper” to detail its vision of the future of its army, the Bundeswehr. It is an update of the White Paper edited by the federal government in 2016.

Considering the return of military actions in geopolitical relations and assessing the various threats facing Germany and Europe, the paper bases the necessary capabilities on the following roles of Germany: reliable nation for less powerful allies, implying diverse capabilities, first responder country in case of crisis on EU or NATO borders, given its central geographic position, troops and support contributor, defender of its values and warrant of its own security.

To tackle that, stress is put on filling capabilities gap and keeping up on new technologies, with additional spending increase. Tools for a better strategic debate are also suggested at all levels; notably, a security week in Parliament with an annual report on the security situation, and a “Bundeswehr Planning Act” with a multiannual budget basis, however still in accordance with the Bundestag budgetary sovereignty.

It is last stated that shortfalls of the Bundeswehr from recent years are known and solutions will be implemented, mainly on procurement and decision-making processes.

European Union external operations [FR](#) [EN](#) [EN](#) [IT](#)

IRINI – Support to arm embargo on Libya

The French aviso Premier Maitre l’Her has joined for 2 months the Greek Aigaion and Italian Borsini vessels to participate in EU effort on arm embargo on Libya.

ATALANTA - Counter-piracy in the Gulf of Aden

- The ATALANTA commander Major General Planells left his place to Vice Admiral Diaz del Rio
- Spanish Landing Platform Dock Castilla has joined the operation, with a joint naval exercise with Japan destroyer Ariake in the Arabian Sea.

Task Force Takuba – Training and support of Malian forces

Italy joins the Task Force in Mali with around 100 soldiers, mainly from Special Forces, 20 vehicles and 8 helicopters: 4 attack helicopters AW-129D Mangusta and 4 transport helicopters NH90.

The authorisation for a deployment of up to 200 men was voted in summer 2020 by the Italian Parliament. Its size is similar to the Swedish contingent and, joined with the helicopter support, should have real effect.

US administration will maintain the 2% GDP rule for NATO defence budgets [FR](#)

Biden administration has expressed and shown concrete sign of its will to strengthen and rely on NATO alliance and transatlantic relationship. However, as some voices in Europe plead for a stronger Europe inside NATO, the organisation also intend to be more firm on some commitments from allies, especially regarding the 2% GDP rule for defence investments.

This rule has been defined as the level necessary for the participation of the countries to the mutual assistance effort. However, there are currently only 10 countries out of 30 meeting this objective, 2 of which, France and Norway, due primarily to GDP contraction in 2020.

Llyod Austin, the new Head of Pentagon, stressed this criteria in a recent NATO meeting, stating that « if we don’t invest enough money today, we will not be ready for tomorrow’s challenges ». In the meantime, Jens Stoltenberg, NATO General Secretary, pointed out that « burden sharing also includes contributions and capabilities ».